

Another hearing for Rezmar plan

'Lots of accesses' and an improved Clark Street will ease traffic, say developers

By LYDIALYLE GIBSON
Staff Writer

Marshaling a troupe of engineers, developers, and City Hall higher-ups to her side—plus a couple of Illinois congressmen—last Wednesday night in the basement of the Harold Washington Library, 2nd Ward Alderman Madeline Haithcock hoped to find a few answers for South Loop residents. About a possible new Ikea and the logjam of cars choking Clark and Roosevelt. About bike lanes and gro-

cery stores and riverbank greenspace.

Now navigating a neighborhood of growing size, growing families, and growing traffic, locals were looking to find out just how a few development projects right now in the works will shape their neighborhood. Namely, a proposal by Rezmar Corp. to plant some 4,000 new homes and 550,000 square feet of retail along the river's eastern bank from Roosevelt to 16th, and a city plan to unclog Clark Street by sending part of it underground.

Not for the first time, Rezmar Vice See REZMAR on Page 10

Metal machine

EPA Region 5 Records Ctr.
226382

By LAURA PUTRE
Editor

The future of West Loop parking may have much to do with a big, boxy contraption that looks like an ATM's distant cousin, if a plan laid out by neighborhood leaders congeals in the next few months.

Last Tuesday night, West Loop Community Organization vice president Jeff Taylor unveiled a "pay and display" machine at a public meeting to discuss how to keep the increasingly residential neighborhood from turning into downtown's parking lot. The scarcity of daytime parking has been a major concern in the neighborhood in recent years, with suburban day-trippers inventively avoiding high downtown parking fees by driving into the West

Loop, park transportation to

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Finding ABLA's promised

By LYDIALYLE GIBSON
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New Joy Divine Full Gospel Church is counting its b

For the flock at New Joy Divine Full Gospel Church West, the kerosene heater is a thing of the past. So are the toilets that

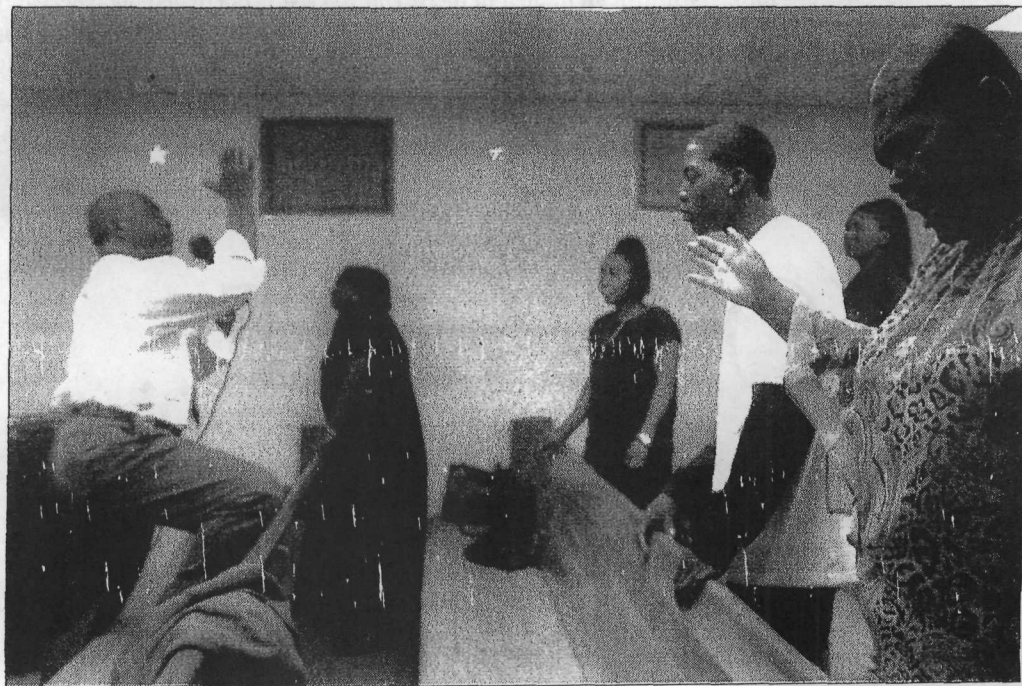
won't flush, the hot water that won't heat up, and the fires that erupt from time to time upstairs. And the low ceiling, the cramped

NEAR WEST quarters, the occasional floods and lingering mildewed air. No more inhospitable landlords, no more soaring rents, no more \$10,000 gas bills. New Joy Divine, as Pastor Leonard Royster kept telling worshippers last Sunday morning, is leaving Egypt.

"We paid some dues here," Royster said, to the cheers and amens of his worshippers. "We've been humbled by this place. But we're going to the promised land, and it's only two blocks away. ... I want you to turn to your neighbor and say, 'Neighbor, we're leaving Egypt.'"

A jubilant chorus went up: "Neighbor, we're leaving Egypt."

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Born and raised in ABLA, Pastor Leonard Royster leads a service that's part praise, part preaching.

REZMAR

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President and Senior Project Director Judi Fishman rose to the podium to offer last week's gathering an overview of her firm's intentions. Flanked by four-color renderings and a tabletop model of the project, Fishman said Rezmar officials mean to turn 62 acres of untamed South Loop wilderness into shops, restaurants, parks, town houses, a high-rise here and there.

"What we have now is 62 vacant acres," Fishman said.

Once Rezmar officials are through, the site will also have a grassy riverwalk, three dog parks, 250,000 square feet of storefront retail, and—if a deal right now on the table goes through—a 300,000-square-foot Ikea at its nucleus. Scaled down, that Ikea would be hidden behind landscaping, ivy vines, and a row of loft homes lining its southern wall. Wells Street, which right now dead ends near Polk, would unfold all the way to 18th. Within the wild and wooded parcel, several cross streets—13th, 14th, 15th—would stretch Wells to the Metra tracks just shy of Clark.

Raised up to Roosevelt's elevation, clothing stores, florists, dry cleaners, book dealers, and specialty shops would anchor the site's northern edge. Three levels of parking would be tucked underneath.

"We've been working on this plan for a year and a half," Fishman said, noting that she hoped to have the project's first phase—the northerly shops and parking garage—open by the end of 2006.

Locals wanted to hear more about traffic—and Ikea. They wanted to make sure Rezmar officials had planned for cars coming and going from the Sunday Maxwell Market at Roosevelt and Canal and a new Target now under construction across Roosevelt to the north. Residents asked about the weekend shopping rush. One woman suggested a trolley to haul shoppers between Target and Ikea. And what about the cars from those 4,000 new households? Some said they'd rather not see Ikea there at all.

"Don't you like Ikea?" Haithcock asked one man who'd objected. "I like Ikea—they have it all hidden in there. Did you see it? It's nice."

"It's not that I don't like Ikea,"

the man replied. "I just don't want I in my neighborhood."

Another local, Katherine Wright, asked about making her opposition to Ikea more formal.

"If it's a done deal, it's a done deal, if the city and the alderman are behind it," Wright said to Haithcock. "But if it's not a done deal, what do we do if it's something we don't agree with?"

Kristen Groce, project manager for the Department of Planning and Development, insisted Rezmar's proposal is far from sewed up.

"It's not approved," Groce said. "It's not a done deal yet."

Meanwhile, others asked about traffic.

"How is that traffic not going to be a huge nightmare all the way around there?" another woman asked.

Fishman's answer: "Lots of accesses."

Rezmar's site will be positively porous, according to Fishman, with entrances off Clark, Roosevelt, Wells, and 18th. And once inside, motorists will park their cars and walk—not drive—from store to store.

Wells Street residents living north of Polk worried that opening up that roadway would mean more trucks—and buses and

cars—roaring past their front windows.

"The intention is not to make it a throughway down there, but one that moves very well and has the characteristic of a neighborhood street," Miguel d'Escoto, commissioner of the city's Department of Transportation, offered by way of assurance.

D'Escoto also insisted that a CDOT project to alter Clark Street would also help ease traffic. According to the plan, first announced early this summer, three lanes of through-traffic will be submerged beneath Roosevelt Road, which they'll cross without stopping. Ramp on either side of Clark, meanwhile, will allow motorists to turn onto and off of Roosevelt. Haithcock promised those gathered that Roosevelt would remain open during Clark Street's reconstruction.

"Roosevelt and Clark is a main way into and out of the city during the rush," d'Escoto said. "Ten years ago, we predicted Roosevelt would be the next great commercial corridor in the city. This project totally separates the people who want to turn on Roosevelt from people who just want to get in and out of the city."

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